

Sermon: Good News. Great Joy.

Text: Luke 2:4-18

Discussion Questions:

For those of you who have heard the Christmas account in Luke 2 many different times, it is easy to take for granted the fact that the very first people who heard about the birth of Jesus were a bunch of shepherds watching over their sheep on a lonely winter night. But if you had been alive back in those days, shepherds might have been the very last people you would have thought that God would announce His birth to. They were often considered the very lowest of the low.

There are a lot of guesses as to why the angels visited shepherds. One reason might have to do with the fact that God calls Himself the “Good Shepherd” in Psalm 23, and Jesus says the same thing in John 10. It is also interesting to note that some of the people that God used in very significant ways in the Old Testament (such as Moses and David) were shepherds. But there’s probably an even better explanation. When Jesus came to this earth because of His great love for us, He wanted to be crystal clear that He came for EVERYBODY—regardless of what anyone else thought of them. Shepherds might have been viewed as “non-important nobodies” by others, but in God’s eye’s they were “very important somebodies”!

- If Jesus had been born today in our town, who do you think the angels might have appeared to?
- If this is how God treated the shepherds, what does this teach us about how we ought to treat people that aren’t just like us?
- How do you think it made Mary and Joseph feel to have these shepherds join them in that dark and dank cave? Do you think they appreciated having visitors?
- How do you suppose the shepherds were acting when they went to visit Jesus? What do you think their mood was?

Examination:

- Read **Luke 2:4-7**:
 - The journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem is about 75 miles as the crow flies...and closer to 100 miles on any navigable roads. And it is due south from Nazareth to Bethlehem. Why do you think the Bible states that Joseph “went up” from the town of Nazareth to Bethlehem—when it is often customary when heading due south to talk about “going down”? Is there any significance to the fact that Joseph and Mary “went up”?
 - Is there Biblical proof that Joseph “belonged to the house and line of David”? Where might you find that proof?
 - Why is it important that Joseph came from the lineage of David? Are there any prophecies in the Old Testament that talk about the fact that the Messiah would come from King David’s lineage?
 - We are told in verses 1-3 of Luke chapter 2 the reason why Joseph had to take his pregnant wife to Bethlehem. What do you think went through Joseph’s mind when he learned of this decree? Do you think he was aware of the “Upper Story”?

- Do you believe that God put it in the mind of Caesar Augustus to issue this decree that a census should be taken? What does this say about God’s sovereignty over kings and rulers?
 - Does it say that Mary was Joseph’s wife when they traveled to Bethlehem?
 - How long were they in Bethlehem? How far into her pregnancy was Mary when they traveled?
 - We often think of Jesus being born in a stable. Does the text actually say this? The two clues we have in terms of an actual location for the birth are of a “manger” (also mentioned in verses 12 & 16), and there being no guest rooms available. Think beyond the typical scene we envision (the crèche). Given these two clues, what are some other possible scenarios for the birth of Christ?
- Read **Luke 2:8-18**:
 - What do you make of the fact that the shepherds actually “lived” in the fields near Bethlehem? They didn’t just “work” in the fields—they lived in the fields. Is that something you’ve ever thought about?
 - Why would a shepherd need to keep watch over their flocks at night? What hazards might the sheep face? What would the shepherd need to be prepared to do in the event of a crisis? Might this put them on edge?
 - Is there any way to imagine what it would have been like for an angel to suddenly appear beside you—accompanied by “the glory of the Lord shining” around you? How bright do you suppose the “glory of the Lord” is?
 - Discuss the significance of these three phrases:
 - “Good news”:
 - “Great joy”:
 - “All the people”:
 - Perhaps the most important word in this entire narrative is the word “Savior.” A Savior has been born to us.
 - Why is this word so important?
 - What does this word imply? Does a person who is in no danger need a savior?
 - What did Jesus come to save us from? Why does this matter?
 - Do most people understand/comprehend their need for a savior?
 - The word “Messiah” is no small thing. Jesus is not just another baby. What does the use of this word Messiah refer to? How prevalent is this concept of a Messiah in the Old Testament?
 - Finding Jesus wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger wasn’t just an indication that they had the right baby—it was a SIGN (v. 12). Signs always point to bigger things beyond themselves. What was this sign pointing to?
 - What did the shepherds do with what they had seen? What do you think they said to people?
 - We read in verse 18 that “all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them.” The word “amazed” can be taken several different ways. Think back to how you answered the first discussion question. If this person began telling you about seeing angels, and visiting a baby in manger—would you believe them?

Application:

Open your heart to new truths that Jesus can reveal to you this week about His birth. Be intentional about thanking Him every day that He came to be YOUR Savior! YOUR rescuer!